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**Strategic Self Depreciation: The Development of Communist China's
Foreign Policy Towards Africa, 1954-1964**

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Dedication

To my parents for always supporting me, no matter what.

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Abstract

Strategic Self Depreciation: The Development of Communist China's Foreign Policy Towards Africa, 1954-1964

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The growing importance of China in Africa today makes the examination of the history of Communist China's foreign policy towards Africa a necessary undertaking. In recent years, there has been an escalation of attention paid to China's political and economic role in developing nations, with particular attention granted to China's policies in African countries. However, China did not just begin to pay attention to Africa at the close of the twentieth century, and it is the purpose of this paper to look at the beginnings of these policies. Chronologically, this paper focuses on the birth and early evolution of China's foreign policy towards Africa, namely from the years 1954 to 1964. These dates represent not only the beginning, but also a significant change in China's foreign policies towards Africa. While many of the policies adopted and adapted by Communist China during this period were to encompass the whole of the emerging third world, this paper

focuses on Africa, and in particular Zambia for more specific examples. China played an important role in the newly independent nations of Africa in the early 1960s, and it continues to play a significant, and often controversial, role there today.

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Introduction

The growing importance of China in Africa today makes the examination of the history of Communist China's foreign policy towards Africa a necessary undertaking. In recent years, scholars, journalists, and other observers have paid growing attention to China's political and economic role in developing nations, focusing special attention on China's policies in African countries. In the past decade, China has increased its political presence in Africa as it has provided economic aid and assistance. As the Chinese government generously develops infrastructure such as roads and hospitals, Chinese businesses have bought mines and access to other natural resources like oil and timber and have flooded African markets with cheap Chinese consumer goods. However, China did not just begin to pay attention to Africa at the close of the twentieth century and it is the purpose of this paper to look at the beginnings of these policies.

Following the Communist Revolution of 1949, China became an increasingly important presence on the world stage. Although not yet the world power of the contemporary era, the West still regarded China as an important player in the global chess game of the Cold War. Countries such as the United States and Great Britain watched with avid attention as Chinese officials developed new policies, both domestic and those regarding foreign relations. Of particular concern was China's policy toward the newly coined "third world"¹ and its effects on Cold War political alignment. While

¹ With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, the use of the term "third world" became irrelevant and, to some, demeaning towards the countries to which it referred. However, while it is now generally more acceptable to use such terminology as the "developing world" or "global south," this paper will continue to use "third world" without quotations. This is due to not

there were many dynamics involved in the establishment of China's foreign policy, this paper argues that two factors stand out as being the most crucial in the development of policies towards Africa. These include China's self-identification as a third world nation and the importance of political alignment in the Cold War.

Chronologically, this paper focuses on the birth and early evolution of China's foreign policy towards Africa, namely from the years 1954 to 1964. The 1955 Bandung Conference was a seminal moment in the development of Asian-African relations. China's newly formed communist government's stated aims at the conference differed greatly from the policies that it would adapt in the coming decade. What instead would develop in 1957 was the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organization, which had the effect of increasing the significance of China's role in Africa, replacing a relationship seemingly based on equality with one based implicitly on power relations through the establishment of diplomatic relations and the beginnings of economic aid. While many of the policies adopted and adapted by Communist China during this period were to encompass the whole of the emerging third world, this paper focuses on Africa, and in particular Zambia for more specific examples. China played an important role in the newly independent nations of Africa in the early 1960s, and it continues to play a significant, and often controversial, role there today.

only the popularity and widespread use of the division during the period discussed, but also because this was how countries, often proudly, referred to themselves during the Cold War as it meant they had no particular political alignment.

Chinese Foreign Policy, 1949-1954

On October 1, 1949, the new People's Republic of China was faced with a huge domestic agenda. The need for political and economic stability at home did not mean that China could ignore foreign policy, however, with geopolitical concerns immediately becoming a priority. China's foreign policy in its early years, namely from 1949 to 1954, focused on the its neighbors and was a much different type of foreign policy from that which developed in subsequent years towards Africa. The first major foreign policy concern of China was Korea, with the war in Korea breaking out on June 25, 1950, less than a year after the Communist Party won control of the government.

In his book *Mao's China and the Cold War*, Chen Jian discusses China's role in the Korean War. Chen explains that the impetus for the war lay solely on the shoulders of Kim Il-sung, with the Soviet Union reluctantly providing assistance as Stalin feared a direct confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States on the Korean peninsula. Stalin encouraged Kim to request assistance from Beijing so as to share the responsibility but Mao and the CCP were hesitant. In the end, however, Chen explains that Mao came to Kim's assistance “because Mao and his comrades were eager to revive China's central position on the international scene through supporting revolutionary movements in other countries (especially in East Asia).”²

China's involvement in the Korean War was directly hinged on support from the Soviet Union. However, after the United States became involved, as Stalin had feared they would, Soviet Union support quickly dwindled. This was the first major test of the

² Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 54.

Sino-Soviet alliance, a relationship that would continually be tried until the eventual split. In the end though, China's decision to assist Kim gave Stalin a more favorable opinion of Mao's CCP and he “became more willing to commit Soviet financial and technological resources to China's economic reconstruction.”³ It is clear that immediate foreign policy concerns for China were directly related to domestic concerns, including fostering its relationship with the Soviet Union for strategic and economic motivations, as well as regional concerns over the stability and support for revolution in East Asia. However, China's early foreign policy did not directly translate into its foreign policy towards the developing world and Africa in particular. Although some motivations remained the same, China’s foreign policy towards Africa focused on a strategic self-depreciation of its role in global affairs, rather than an attempt at regional leadership.

³ Ibid., 60.

Strategic Self Depreciation

In his book, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*, political scientist Crawford Young examines the reasons why many African states failed following independence. In order to accomplish his goals, he first explains the major components of a modern nation state and how scholars can use the nation state in analyses of both domestic and foreign policy. While the focus of the rest of his book is on Africa, his explanation of the state as “an elusive and complex prey” is a useful description for any modern nation state, as is his description of its major components.⁴

The attributes that Young identifies in the modern nation state include: territory, population, sovereignty (an important concept in the era of decolonization), power, and law. However, Young also examines the state as a nation, as an international actor, and as an idea. This definition of a state, the concept of a state’s self-identification being exposed, particularly regarding its “role as a member of an international system.”⁵ How the state, both in the terms of the people who call themselves members or citizens of the state and those who make the decisions at the highest levels of government, chooses to be seen in this international arena definitively determines its foreign policy and its relations with other states.

The complex geopolitical situation of the Cold War is a poignant example of the importance of this self-identification, as for the first time nation-states were categorized into “worlds.” In 1952, economist and demographer Alfred Sauvy published an article in

⁴ Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 13.

the French magazine *L'Observateur* coining the term “third world.” Sauvy used the term to refer to those countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America that, as they achieved political independence from colonial powers, had not yet determined a political alignment with the “first world” of the United States and Western Europe or the “second world” of the Soviet Union. This indirect reference to the third estate of the French Revolution implied that the third world was taken advantage of much like the peasantry was in eighteenth century France.

The images that the United States and Soviet Union portrayed to the rest of the world during this time were paramount to their policy. Perhaps the best example of this image game can be seen in the “Kitchen Debate” at the opening of the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow. Here, the United States strove to be viewed as more progressive than the Soviet Union in an example of the great debate between capitalism versus socialism. No matter what was happening internally in each of these countries, each sought to appear to be more economically viable and politically stable than the other.

However, China chose a much different approach in the image game of the Cold War. In their book *United Front Against Imperialism*, G.P. Deshpande and H.K. Gupta explain, “Following the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, the Chinese world view reflected the objective situation in which China found herself.”⁶ The situation in the late 1950s and early 1960s was one of newfound importance. During this period, China focused on the United States and the West as the enemy, while maintaining a

⁵ Ibid., 21.

precarious, yet at this point still largely positive relationship with the Soviet Union.

Therefore, in a form of strategic self-depreciation, separate from its desire to once again be a leader in East Asia, China sought to align itself with the developing nations of the third world.

⁶ G. P. Deshpande and H. K. Gupta, *United Front against Imperialism China's Foreign Policy in Africa* (Bombay: Somaiya Publications, 1986), 16.

The Bandung Conference of 1955

The new members of the third world did not necessarily want to align themselves politically with the United States or the Soviet Union. Some of the third world was beginning to self-identify as non-aligned nations and in April of 1954, Indonesia proposed that a conference of Asian and African nations convene to discuss issues concerning these nations. The Bandung Conference, which took place from the April 18 to April 24, 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia, was the first large scale meeting of Africa and Asian nations, many of which were newly independent and some still under colonial rule. In total, twenty-nine countries sent delegates, many of which represented newly independent nations, such as India and Pakistan, but some of which also represented nations that had not yet gained full independence, such as the Gold Coast, soon to be the independent nation of Ghana.

The agenda of the conference was part of a greater movement culminated in the conference and the subsequent formation of the Non-Alignment Movement. In his description of the proceedings of the conference, Secretary General of the Indian Council for World Affairs A. Appadorai stated the conferences aims as:

(1) Economic Co-operation- It was understood that this would include a discussion on the peaceful uses of atomic energy; (2) Cultural Co-operation; (3) Human Rights and Self-Determination- Under this item, the questions of Palestine and racialism would be discussed; (4) Problems of Dependent Peoples- This would include a discussion on Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco; and (5) Promotion of World Peace and Co-operation- The

question of weapons of mass destruction and disarmament would be discussed under this item.⁷

More broadly, the conference had the implicit goals of creating a coalition against imperialism. With the creation of the United Nations charter and the establishment of the principle of “national self-determination,” it seemed inevitable that the colonies of Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean would eventually be granted sovereignty. However, the political realities of the Cold War left many of the newly independent nations wary of the role that the United States or the Soviet Union hoped to play in their independence.

Therefore, while the Bandung Conference was deemed a success and a “milestone on the road to peace and progress”⁸ in its achievements of its stated aims, its legacy was the birth of the ideas that formed the Non-Alignment Movement. The idea for the movement came out of speech given by Indian Prime Minister Nehru in New Delhi, in which he laid out the “Panch Shila,” or Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence for Sino-Indian relations.⁹ Yet, while the Non-Alignment movement, which today has 118 members, was born out of a discussion of the relationship between India and China, it was never signed by the Chinese, and today they still only hold observer status.

Although China was not yet the world power that it would become in the twenty-first century, the communist revolution of 1949 meant that much of the world, particularly many officials in the United States, viewed China as more of a member of the

⁷ A. Appadorai and Affairs Indian Council of World, *The Bandung Conference* (New Delhi: Indian Council of World Affairs, 1955), 6.

⁸ Ibid., 32.

⁹ Charles Neuhauser, *Third World Politics; China and the Afro-Asian People's [Sic] Solidarity Organization, 1957-1967*, Harvard East Asian Monographs, 27 (Cambridge: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University; distributed by Harvard University Press, 1968), 3.

second world, rather than a member of the third world, and of a level of concern similar to that of the Soviet Union. Yet China, with the full backing of Nehru under the auspices of the “Panch Shila,” and as an Asian nation not a communist nation, was a key player at the conference. China’s delegate to the conference, Zhou En-Lai,¹⁰ played a very visible, and at times controversial, role in Bandung. China’s attempts to establish a distinct foreign policy are first evidenced in their participation in the 1954 Geneva conference. The conference sought to establish peace in French Indo-China and in Vietnam and was where Zhou En-Lai, as the Chinese delegate, first established himself as “a tough but reasonable negotiator.”¹¹ It was also the first visit of a communist leader to a non-communist country during peacetime. Five years after the Communist Revolution, China had begun to seriously develop its foreign policy agenda beyond the East Asian region.

Regarding China's foreign policy towards Africa, there was one issue in particular that the Chinese government felt it could not ignore when considering diplomatic relations: the issue of Taiwan. This issue was first discussed at the Asian Nations Conference, held just prior to Bandung from the April 6 to the April 10, 1955. While the conference was more unofficial and less influential than Bandung, it had the participation of both the Soviet Union and China, and “there can be little doubt that the meetings in India and Indonesia were linked in the sense that the organizers of the New Delhi meeting hoped that its deliberations would influence the forthcoming discussions in

¹⁰ “Zhou” is also sometimes spelled “Chou.” Zhou En-Lai was the first prime minister of the People’s Republic of China, where he served from October 1, 1949 until his death on January 8, 1976. He was also the foreign minister from 1949 to 1958 and was a key player in the communist party’s rise to power and in the Cultural Revolution.

¹¹ Neuhauser, *Third World Politics; China and the Afro-Asian People's [Sic] Solidarity Organization, 1957-1967*.

Bandung.”¹² The conference, heavily influenced by the participation of the communist powers China and the Soviet Union, discussed issues similar to those advanced at Bandung, but China placed particular emphasis on UN recognition of the government in Peking over the government in Taipei. The diplomatic recognition of one capital over another would prove to be a crucial culmination of Chinese-African relations in 1971, as African nations played the deciding role in the People’s Republic of China’s establishment as the internationally recognized government of China.¹³

Later at Bandung, Zhou showed his deft diplomatic skills in two speeches that laid the foundation of China’s foreign policy towards the third world. The first speech was originally intended as his keynote speech for the conference but was scrapped for a new speech with the first one handed out in mimeographed form to all of the delegates. This first speech focused on China’s commonalities with the other nations of Asia and Africa, particularly in terms of subjection to colonial rule. Zhou’s speech stated passionately, “Our voices have been suppressed, our aspirations shattered, and our destiny placed in the hands of others...Suffering from the same cause and struggling for the same aim.”¹⁴ The speech went on to emphasize, “The majority of our Asian and African countries, including China, are still very backward economically owing to the long period of colonial domination.”¹⁵ China’s reference to itself as a post-colonial nation

¹² Ibid., 4.

¹³ Wei Liang-Tsai discusses the importance of this issue in detail in the 1982 book *Peking Versus Taipei in Africa: 1960-1978*. It must be noted, however, that the book was published by The Asia and World Institute of Taiwan, and has a very clear objective and obvious bias in its interpretation. There has not been a non-partisan account of the role of Africa in the recognition of Peking.

¹⁴ Zhou En-Lai, *China and the Asian-African Conference: Documents* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1979), 10.

¹⁵ Ibid., 13.

was controversial, as many felt that China had not been subject to the same level of colonial domination as many of the other nations present. This was particularly significant since China's only true colonial holdings were Hong Kong and Macau. Yet, more importantly, this was an crucial example of China's strategy of self-depreciation as the cornerstone of its third world foreign policy.

The skepticism of other delegates about Zhou En-Lai's first speech and his references to China as a "semi-colonial society"¹⁶ led Zhou to draft a supplementary speech that he gave orally as the first was distributed. This speech took a more definitive stance on China's role in the Cold War geopolitical situation. Here, Zhou stated:

The Chinese Delegation has come here to seek unity and not to quarrel.

We Communists do not hide the fact that we believe in communism and that we consider socialist system a good system. There is no need at this Conference to publicize one's ideology and the political system of one's country.¹⁷

His first speech never mentioned the political ideology of the Chinese government, yet the second speech emphasized the point from the outset. The political realities of the Cold War made China's unique interpretation of Marxism impossible to ignore.

Additionally, the first speech did not mention the controversy surround Taipei. However, Zhou's less rehearsed second speech makes it obvious that others had pressed him to address the issue. Regarding Taipei, he stated:

¹⁶ Ibid., 14.

¹⁷ Ibid., 21.

As for the tension created solely by the United States in the area of Taiwan, we could have submitted for deliberation by the Conference an item such as the proposal made by the Soviet Union for seeking a settlement through an international conference. The will of the Chinese people to liberate their own territory Taiwan and the coastal islands is a just one. It is entirely a matter of our internal affairs and the exercise of our sovereignty...But we did not do all this, because otherwise our Conference would be dragged into disputes about all of these problems without any solution.¹⁸

This was an important departure from the emphasis that Zhou had placed on Taiwan at the preceding conference. The issue had not even made the agenda of Bandung, as Zhou pointed out, yet he felt pressured to bring it up in his supplementary speech. Despite China's desire to keep the matter an internal issue, Zhou's references at Bandung foreshadow the important role that diplomatic recognition, especially in the United Nations, would play in relations between China and the third world, particularly Africa.

Despite the importance of these two now seemingly unavoidable issues of political ideology and the recognition of Taipei, the original strategy of self-depreciation remained deeply embedded in the rhetoric of the second speech. Here, Zhou continued to emphasize China's equality with other developing, newly independent nations. He asked of his audience after explaining China's definitive communist stance: "Is there any basis for seeking common ground among us?" His answer went back to the intentions of his first speech. He stated:

¹⁸ Ibid., 22.

Yes, there is. The overwhelming majority of the Asian and African countries and peoples have suffered and are still suffering from the calamities of colonialism. This is acknowledged by all of us. If we seek common ground in doing away with the sufferings and calamities under colonialism, it will be very easy for us to have mutual understanding and respect, mutual sympathy and support, instead of mutual suspicion and fear, mutual exclusion and antagonism.¹⁹

This declaration was coupled with an emphasis that China fully backed the aims and proposals of the conference, and Zhou gave an enthusiastic speech on the successes of the conference at its conclusion.

On the one-year anniversary of Bandung, enthusiasm was still strong among many nations, including China, about the joint project that had begun. In a telegraph from Zhou to the prime minister of Indonesia in April of 1956, Zhou explained:

The Spirit of the Bandung Conference of peaceful coexistence and anti-colonialism has deeply impressed people from all around the world, especially those from Asian and African countries. The resolutions passed in the conference have reflected the common desire of the Asian and African people to strive for and maintain independence and liberty, uphold world peace and promote friendly cooperation. The influence of these resolutions are now expanding by the joint efforts of the people from Asian and African countries.²⁰

¹⁹ Ibid.
²⁰ FMAPRC: 105-00311-02

In honor of the anniversary, nations such as China and Indonesia held a brief ceremony commemorating the previous year's events and foreshadowing the new organization about to be born.

Establishment of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization

The Bandung Conference laid the ground for the future of China's relations with the third world. However, this diplomatic strategy based heavily on the self-identification of its participants was constantly adapting and evolving according to the current political realities of the Cold War and decolonization. The first evidence of this evolution was the 1957 establishment of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (A.A.P.S.O.), in which China, in the face of pressure from the Soviet Union and with continued distrust towards the United States, began to take a more revolutionary stance in its foreign relations. This growing pressure is evidenced both in the shift internally towards more leftist policies in China, which encouraged a more militant stance against the United States, as well as in concern over new Soviet technology. The Soviet Union's first successful earth satellite, Sputnik I, was launched in October of 1957 and its first successful intercontinental ballistic missile was launched in November 1957 and "was regarded by the Chinese as a mark of decisive international change in the balance of forces between 'Socialism' and 'imperialism.'"²¹

The A.A.P.S.O. was founded at a conference held in Cairo on December 26, 1957. This gathering of 500 delegates from 43 different entities from various Asian and African nations was the largest gathering of its kind. Unlike Bandung, however, the

delegates to the conference in Cairo were not representatives of their country, but rather of specific organizations, which “generally reflected the Communist orientation” of the groups they represented. Despite this orientation, the meeting “while strongly anti-imperialist and anticolonialist as well as generally anti-Western in tone, was not, strictly speaking, a Communist propaganda forum.”²² For while both the Soviet Union and China both had delegations at the conference, the Egyptians also played a prominent role in the meetings.²³

To continue the work of the conference and to continue to promote its objectives, the convening delegates founded the Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organization. The A.A.P.S.O. was not made of countries, but rather individual national organizations, giving countries not yet independent a place to voice their concerns in the international community. The make-up of the A.A.P.S.O. was particularly important for the African organizations that joined as they were often still considered illegal in their country of origin. This also served to downplay the communist nature of the organization, as the main goals of these participants were to promote anticolonial issues, rather than pro-communist ones.

This change in emphasis highlighted the development of relations between China and African nations. As John Cooley explains, “The main advantage that the Chinese derived was a series of new footholds and new bases for exchanges with Africa...This

²¹ Ogunshawo, 15.

²² Neuhauser, *Third World Politics; China and the Afro-Asian People's [Sic] Solidarity Organization, 1957-1967*, 12.

²³ The Philippines, Turkey, and Pakistan boycotted the conference due to their close diplomatic ties with the United States. Washington “took dim view of the meeting,” as described

gave the Chinese an opportunity to catch up with the Soviets, who had maintained regular diplomatic, consular or commercial contacts in some African countries since the 1920s.”²⁴ Beyond the A.A.P.S.O., China sought to promote its own form of militant agricultural Marxism, which its promoters believed to be more relevant to the countries of Africa than the urban proletariat uprisings of the Marxism of the Soviet Union. It was through the A.A.P.S.O. that China first began to promote national liberation movements, particularly in nations where it seemed possible for a communist revolution of the agricultural peasantry.

In this promotion of national liberations struggles in Africa, the first state in which China became involved was Egypt. In October of 1956, Britain, France, and Israel attacked the Suez Canal following the July decision of the Egyptian government to nationalize the Canal when the United States and Great Britain decided not to fund the building of the Aswan Dam. The Suez Crisis represented for many African nations the neo-imperialist ambitions of the countries of the first world. Claiming support for Egypt during this time was synonymous with issuing support for the anticolonialist coalition that was gaining prominence through the non-alignment movement. Therefore, China’s open support in the matter was crucial. China’s support of Egypt during the Suez crisis of 1956 also laid the ground for similar instances of support around the continent. This support was not only in rhetoric, however, but also in more tangible assistance. These goods, which included steel as well as monetary support, were the first instances of

by John K. Cooley, *East Wind over Africa; Red China's African Offensive* (New York: Walker, 1965), 15.

²⁴ Ibid., 16.

economic aid that would become the trademark of Chinese foreign policy in Africa in the coming years.

Following on the heels of China's support of Egypt was their support of Algeria. The Algerian War of Independence was one of Africa's most important decolonization struggles. Lasting from November 1954 to March of 1962, it was certainly the longest and the bloodiest, with upwards of one million Algerians killed in the fighting. The national liberation struggle in Algeria not only affected the Algerians and their French colonizers, but also had profound implications for decolonization throughout Africa. It served as both an inspiration for other independence movements throughout Africa, as well as a great source of concern for British colonial officials. Because of the Algerian War, the process of decolonization was rushed in many colonies where independence was in the short-term plans of the colonizers, and was even begun without any prior plan for the allowance of sovereignty and self-governance in the Belgian Congo – a process that proved detrimental to their stability following independence.

Like in its support of Cairo in the Suez Crisis, even prior to the establishment of the A.A.P.S.O. China had showed unwavering support for the liberation struggle in Algeria. Zhou, in his first speech handed out at the Bandung Conference, stated China's support:

... we cannot help being aware that the peoples of Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and other dependent peoples who have been fighting for independence have never ceased to be suppressed with violence... One should say that now the common desire of the awakened countries and peoples of Asia and Africa is to oppose racial discrimination and to

demand fundamental human rights, to oppose colonialism and to demand for national independence, to firmly defend their own territorial integrity and sovereignty.²⁵

China continued to be supportive throughout the Algerians' struggle, and was rewarded with their goal of Algeria's recognition of the government in Peking immediately following their declaration of independence.

The liberation struggle in Algeria inspired a number of similar movements around Africa and had created a sense of fear among colonizers of a similar situation erupting in their colonies. In 1957, the British colony of the Gold Coast became the first sub-Saharan African nation to gain independence in the post-war era. The new nation of Ghana, under the radical leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, who had attended the Bandung Conference even prior to independence, was the first of many decolonization movements across the continent.²⁶ In 1960, the year referred to as the "year of African independence," seventeen nations achieved sovereignty and the right to self-governance. Therefore, while Chinese support in the late 1950s tended to focus on North Africa, by the early 1960s China quickly made its presence known in sub-Saharan Africa as well.

This support of independence movements was an important issue in the rhetoric surrounding the establishment of diplomatic relations far past Bandung. In editorials in

²⁵ Zhou, *China and the Asian-African Conference : Documents*, 14-15.

²⁶ Alaba Ogunsawo explains in his book *China's Policy in Africa, 1958-1971* that on the first anniversary of Ghana's independence in 1958, Zhou En Lai sent a message to Kwame Nkrumah stating that the "Chinese people are very glad to see that new successes have continuously been gained by the people of Ghana during the past year in consolidating national independence and safeguarding state sovereignty" (28). However, while Ghana did not establish diplomatic relations with China until 5 July 1960, it was one of the nations that supported Peking in the United Nations as early as 1957.

the nationalist newspapers *People's Daily* and *Red Flag*, the editorial departments published "Apologists of Neo-Colonialism" on October 25, 1963. In the editorial, they stated their support of the newly independent nations of Asian, Africa, and Latin America, emphasizing that "The primary and most urgent task facing these countries is still the further development of the struggle against imperialism, old and new colonialism, and their lackeys."²⁷ The editorials also described the political nature of the struggle, emphasizing the need for an "armed struggle," the hallmark of Maoist Marxism. Additionally, foreshadowing the importance of the economic relationship that was developing between China and many African nations, the editorials stated, "It is important for the newly independent countries to develop their independent economy. But this task must never be separated from the struggle against imperialism, old and new colonialism, and their lackeys."²⁸

All of these colonies gaining the right to self-government greatly concerned the major players of the Cold War. The United States in particular was adamant against allowing key African nations, in terms of geography, natural resources, or population, to develop a socialist form of government or establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. While the U.S. did not care as much about the political alignment of smaller nations such as Cameroon or Burundi, both considered more "leftist" states immediately following their independence, it did care heavily about the political alignment of nations such as the Congo.

²⁷ Alan Lawrance, *China's Foreign Relations since 1949* (London; Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1975), 168.

²⁸ Ibid.

A State Department telegram on August 6, 1964, illustrates this concern and one of the main reasons the Congo was so strategic. In the telegram, sent to the Brussels and Leopoldville embassies from Washington, foreign policy advisors discussed the critical nature of the situation in the Congo and its importance to the United States and Europe. The State Department called the Congo the “key to Central Africa,” as the largest country in the region, sharing a border with nine different nations, all with the potential to fall under communist influence.²⁹ The idea of the “domino effect” was central in United States foreign policy during this period – for example, one need only look to the counties of Southeast Asia- and this was a prime example of such a fear. Foreign policy makers assumed that if a large, influential nation like the Congo could maintain democratic stability, it would influence its small, less influential neighbors in a similar direction.

The communist infiltration in the Congo differed from the United States officials' fear of Soviet influence seen in many international examples. The major concern about the Congo by 1964 actually lay in the fear of Chinese influence. In a research memorandum by Thomas Hughes, the United States Director of Research and Intelligence in the State Department, from August of 1964, he explained, “given the distance of the Congo from the USSR and Soviet reluctance to become involved in direct confrontations with the US, we would not expect any direct Soviet intervention in such circumstances.”³⁰ However, while the Soviet Union remained relatively uninterested in the situation in the Congo, the Chinese repeatedly proved their interest.

²⁹ U.S. Department of State telegram to Brussels and Leopoldville embassies, 6 August 1964, National Security Files, Congo Country File, Johnson Presidential Library.

³⁰ Thomas L. Hughes, Research Memorandum to the Secretary of State, 7 August 1964, National Security Files, Congo Country File, Johnson Presidential Library.

In a speech made before the Banquet of the International Congress of French-speaking Africa of Georgetown University on 18 August 1964, W. Averell Harriman, the U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, explained to his audience, “Guerrilla handbooks of Chinese origin have been found in the Congo....The tactics used by the rebels show unmistakably Chinese Communist inspiration.”³¹ Numerous memos from the State Department and officials in the Congo further reflected the fear of Chinese communist influence on the rebel factions in the Congo. Foreign policy makers raised concerns at the time about the “Chicoms” presence in Congo-Brazzaville and Burundi, as well as concerns that the Chinese were training Congolese rebels, in the Congo and possibly even in China.³² While the truth of these statements is still debated, it was clear that not only was China an increasingly important presence in Africa, but that it also had attracted the attention of the West.

³¹ W. Averell Harriman, Address to the International Congress of French-speaking Africa at Georgetown University, 18 August 1964, National Security Files, Congo Country File, Johnson Presidential Library.

³² George C. Denney Jr., Memorandum: “Chinese Communist Involvement in Congolese Insurrections,” 11 August 1964, National Security Files, Congo Country File, Johnson Presidential Library.

AFRO-ASIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF 1958

In the late 1950s, the United States was concerned with revolutionary and subversive activities, and understandably so considering China's political rhetoric at both Bandung and particularly at the first meeting of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization. However, in reality the relations between China and the third world were becoming increasingly focused on economics. Diplomacy was to go hand in hand with economic aid and investment, first evidenced at the 1958 meeting of the Asian-African Chamber of Commerce.

An off-shoot of the A.A.P.S.O., the Chamber of Commerce was designed to facilitate economic relationships in a mandate by the previous year's conference. The first meeting of the Chamber was held on December 8, 1958 by the United Arab Chamber of Commerce and other similar bodies from A.A.P.S.O. member countries. In a Chinese Foreign Ministry description of the conference, the major goals were described as:

- (1) To search for a means for the cooperation of Asian-African countries in economics, technology, and finance, and to find ways to avoid vicious competitions in markets;
- (2) To create a solution for the defrayal of difficulties facing the Asian-African countries;
- (3) To discuss the influence of the European markets on Asian countries;

(4) To issue the permanent joint body of the Asian-African Chamber of Commerce Meeting.³³

Countries such as India, Japan, and Indonesia were allotted certain goals as their specific responsibilities, but there were concerns by the China's foreign ministry that any of these countries might create difficulties due to their oftentimes precarious relationship with China.

The separate goals of the Chinese government were clear. In the same instructional briefing, they explained that while the majority of nations would attend based on their desire to increase international trade and improve their economies, “We think it is of considerate political significance to offer positive support to this purpose so as to get the majority of participant on our side.” The plan was to reveal the weaknesses in “imperial” aid from sources such as the United States and Japan, and then provide an alternative in the form of “selfless aid” that the Chinese government provided “under the principle of equity and mutual benefit.” In language that was becoming familiar and more fine-tuned, they explained, “We will strive for the promotion of economic development of Asian and African countries in the consistent spirit of equity and mutual benefit and friendly cooperation.”³⁴

³³ FMAPRC: 108-00122-05.

³⁴ Ibid.

Zhou En-Lai in Africa, 1963-64

Before these economic objectives could be implemented the Chinese first had to establish the foundation of diplomatic relations. While China's support of the nationalization of Suez, the national liberation struggle in Algeria, and the conflict in the Congo gathered the most international attention, what was truly important to the Chinese at this time was the African nations' recognition of the government in Peking rather than the government in Taipei. Therefore, while the most influential and important event in the first ten years of China's diplomatic relations with the third world was the increasingly economic emphasis through the A.A.P.S.O., the most symbolic was Zhou En-Lai's trip to Africa in 1963.

The face of China's foreign policy, along with the foreign minister Chen Yi and forty other officials, made the three-month long trip from December of 1963 to February of 1964, visiting nine countries, including Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Ghana, Mali, Guinea, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia. The purpose of this trip was to establish diplomatic relations with the nations of Africa, as well as to explain China's recent opposition to the nuclear test ban treaty, to encourage the meeting of another Bandung, and to emphasize China's stance on giving economic aid to those countries with which it had strong diplomatic ties. China had already demonstrated that it was in fact a "power relevant to Africa"³⁵ through its participation in the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, and through its support of Egypt, Algeria, and the Congo. In fact, prior to

³⁵ Deshpande and Gupta, *United Front against Imperialism China's Foreign Policy in Africa*, 128.

Zhou En Lai's trip, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, Guinea, Ghana, Mali, and Somalia had already established diplomatic relations with Peking. Therefore, much of the trip was largely symbolic, and little was actually accomplished in the countries the delegation visited.

It is also important to note that these were not the first Chinese delegations to African nations following the Bandung Conference. The period immediately following Bandung "was followed by Chinese efforts to increase diplomatic, economic and cultural contacts."³⁶ In 1956 alone, Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, and Ethiopia were all recipients of cultural missions from the Chinese government. Additionally, China began to forge economic ties with African nations, beginning with Egypt, purchasing cotton and increasing its economic ties with the nation beyond that of the economic aid given during the Suez crisis. Egypt also represents the first African nation to establish diplomatic relations with China, and in 1956 the first Chinese embassy in Africa was established in Cairo.

However, the trip had "doctrinal importance," observed in the large amount of rhetoric produced. Speeches were given at every capital visited, often under the title "Afro-Asian Solidarity Against Imperialism," and Peking's *Foreign Language Press* produced a collection of them. Many of them were also reprinted in newspapers in China. The major objectives of the delegation were summarized in a February 6, 1964, editorial in the *People's Daily*. The seven objectives were described as:

- 1) In order to prevent world war, it is necessary to wage an unremitting struggle against imperialist policies of aggression and war;

- 2) The contemporary national liberation movement is an important force in defense of world peace;
- 3) Imperialism and old and new colonialism must be completely liquidated in Africa;
- 4) Asian-African solidarity must be strengthened with the utmost effort;
- 5) ...active preparations should be made for a Second Asian-African Conference;
- 6) Disputes among Asian-African countries should be settled through peaceful negotiations on the basis of Asian-African solidarity;
- 7) National economies should be developed by mainly relying on one's own strength supplemented by foreign assistance.³⁷

While these principles were largely reflective of China's aims for the delegation, they did not mention some of the more implicit goals that are easily evidenced from the rhetoric of the speeches given throughout the trip.

Perhaps the best example of rhetoric is a speech given by Zhou at a rally in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, on February 3, 1964, which was reprinted in the *Peking Review* on February 14. In this speech, known as the "Revolutionary Prospects in Africa Excellent" speech, Zhou returned to the rhetoric of Bandung. He stated, "In each of the African countries we visited, we have deeply felt the African people's strong desire to promote the unity and solidarity of African countries in order to remove the obstacles

³⁶ Ogunsawo, *China's Policy in Africa*, 8.

³⁷ Deshpande and Gupta, *United Front against Imperialism China's Foreign Policy in Africa*, 88.

caused by the colonialists' artificial division of Africa."³⁸ This return to the cause of anticolonialism re-emphasized its importance as the keystone of China's foreign policy towards Africa. Zhou also used the opportunity to implicitly implicate the United States in acting as a neo-imperialist in Africa, while criticizing former imperial powers:

The imperialists will of course never be reconciled to their defeat in Africa. They do not like to see the African people standing up and becoming masters of their own house. Nor do they like to see the independent development and prosperity of the African countries. Some old colonialists are continuing their bloody suppression of the African peoples fighting for independence and freedom; others have resorted to neocolonialist tactics in an attempt to maintain their colonial rule; still others have again revealed their ferocious features as old colonialists after their neo-colonialist tactics were seen through by the masses. They are now stepping up their infiltration and expansion in the political, military, economic and cultural fields by hypocritical means, trying hard to step into the shoes of the old colonialists and place the new emerging African countries under their control.³⁹

While Zhou never outright mentioned the United States, it is obvious that it was his intention to incriminate them along with the former formal colonial powers.

What is most important about his speech, however, and was the part of the trip that held the most importance for future relations between China and African countries,

³⁸ Lawrance, *China's Foreign Relations since 1949*, 171.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 172.

was his promise of economic assistance to those nations with positive diplomatic ties. This meant that not only was China standing with African nations in their criticism of colonialism and neo-imperialism, but also providing them an alternative when it came to economic aid and assistance. In the same speech, Zhou laid out the eight principles of economic aid practiced by the Chinese government. These principles included the importance of “equality and mutual benefit in providing aid,” China’s respect for “the sovereignty and independence” of the nation receiving the aid, that in giving aid, “the purpose of the Chinese government is not the make the recipient countries dependent on China but to help them embark step by step on the road of self-reliance and independent economic development,” and that the when giving any technical assistance, they would not leave until citizens of the country receiving the assistance could “fully master the technique.”⁴⁰

These principles were obviously developed with the problems of colonialism in mind. In them, China sought to alleviate many of the major economic critiques of colonial rule, as well as the new critiques of neo-colonialism. The promotion of economic self-sufficiency had never been on the agenda for colonists, and African nations felt that the neo-imperialist powers, which now included the United States, were anxious to keep them economically dependent. Therefore, while there was little economic interaction between China and the African nations when Zhou gave his speech in Mogadishu, he was correct in stating, “there is no doubt that this mutual aid and economic co-operation will continuously expand in scope and increase in quantity.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ibid., 173-74.

⁴¹ Ibid., 173.

China and Zambia

This increase in economic involvement can be seen in the leap from providing aid to two African nations in 1962, Ghana and Mali, to entering into “trade, economic, technical, scientific and cultural” assistantships with eight countries in 1964.⁴² The increase was largely because China believed that at this time “Africa appeared to be a more promising area of economic activity from the Chinese point of view. Thus as soon as an African country granted the PRC diplomatic recognition, it was immediately rewarded with economic assistance.”⁴³ Economic assistance quickly totaled in the millions of monetary, food, military, and other forms of tangible aid, with the most substantial year being 1970 in which China pledged more than 500 million dollars to African countries.

The amount of aid in 1970 was so substantial because 474 million of those dollars were pledged to the building of the TAZARA Railway. Chinese and African workers built the TanZam Railway from 1970 to 1975, which runs from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on the coast of the Indian Ocean, to Kapiri Mposhi, Zambia. The building of the railway was of particular importance to Zambia, as the people of the newly independent nation needed a route out for their copper, which directly following independence was 95% of their exports. However, this route was blocked by conflict from both the west in Angola and the south in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa.

However, the Chinese did not wait until they were approached about the railway to solicit the new Zambian government. In fact, they did not even wait until Zambia was

⁴² Deshpande and Gupta, *United Front against Imperialism China's Foreign Policy in Africa*, 183.

formally independent to begin reaching out. In June of 1964, He Ying, a member of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, traveled to Northern Rhodesia to meet with the new members of the soon to be Zambian cabinet. Of the thirteen members of the cabinet, He met with ten, including the future president, Kenneth Kaunda. In his telegram report back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, He described a banquet held by Kaunda in his honor. At the banquet He made a speech stating, “After the independence of North Rhodesia, the Chinese government is willing to develop a friendly, cooperative relationship under the Bandung Spirit and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and would agree to dispatch representatives to participate in their independence ceremony and establish diplomatic relationship with them.”⁴⁴

The rhetoric was predictable, as were the beginnings of negotiations that followed. The plan was the same that is was with any other country the Chinese sought diplomatic relations with in the 1960s: “In the UN, the North Rhodesian representative would support the recovery of the lawful seat of China, and there would be no such problem of ‘Two Chinas’ within the boundary of North Rhodesia.” In return for this important international recognition, He explained that “The North Rhodesian government hopes that Chinese government would offer aid to the economic construction after its independence.”⁴⁵ A mutually beneficial relationship had seemingly begun.

Therefore, when a few months later formal independence was granted, the Chinese were ready. In a letter to the new President Kaunda on October 26, 1964, two days after Northern Rhodesia had been given formal independence as the Republic of

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ FMAPRC: 108-00563-01.

Zambia, He Ying expressed his congratulations. However, the letter also expressed “that the Chinese Government is ready immediately to establish diplomatic relations and exchange diplomatic representative on ambassadorial level with Republic of Zambia.” This was of course contingent that “the Zambian government has the same desire and does not have anything to do with the Chiang Kai-Shek clique.”⁴⁶ Diplomatic relations were established, and in fact China was the first nation to do so and the first to start building its embassy in the capital city of Lusaka.

It was not long before the Zambian government began searching for fiscal and tactical support to build a railway out for their copper exports. By 1965, Kaunda and his cabinet had begun approaching governments, including the United States and Great Britain, as well as the World Bank. For a former British colony and member of the Commonwealth, this seemed a logical place to seek out aid and investment. But Kaunda also sought funds from another source, China. Although Kaunda repeatedly emphasized in *Times of Zambia* newspaper articles and editorials that he was looking at all offers to build the railway, and downplayed his negotiations with a communist government, it is clear that the Chinese were always considered a strong contender for the primary investor.

On August 17, 1965, the Chinese Embassy in Zambia produced a telegraph to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing regarding Kaunda’s attitude towards the construction of the TAZARA railway. It explained that “Kaunda was hesitating over whose aid he should accept” and that he hoped the railway could be funded by the World

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ FMAPRC: 108-01381-03.

Bank. At this point, the Chinese seemed unsure of how to interpret Kaunda's speech and actions:

To avoid pressure from imperialism and colonialism he wants to get unconditioned aid from the west, but doesn't think the western countries are reliable. He also wants to accept the aid from China, but worries about the ensuing imperialistic pressure. The contradiction of his thought is reflected in the discrepancy of his speech. Certainly there is another possibility: he wants to urge the western countries to hurry in honoring their promise of aid by claiming to consider aid from China.⁴⁷

Soon after this telegraph, on September 28, the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Transport and Works sent a letter to the Chinese Embassy in Zambia. He stated, "The purpose of this communication is to appraise the Government of the People's Republic of China of what is now taking place and to enquire whether the Government of the People's Republic of China would consider participating in the provision of finance for the later stages of the project."⁴⁸

This request was kept quiet for the moment though, and understandably so. In a Zambian Foreign Ministry report on Chinese policy in Zambia, they explained, "Nobody can doubt that the Chinese do not like our policy of non-alignment....However, in non-alignment we acknowledge the fact that neither communists nor capitalists are innocent of imperialist aggression."⁴⁹ All the way up until June of 1967, just a few months before the final railway contract was signed, Kaunda repeatedly claimed that "Zambia was not

⁴⁷ FMAPRC: 108-00649-02.

⁴⁸ ZNA: FA 1-44.

attempting to play off East against West by approaching a number of countries for assistance with the project.”⁵⁰ Yet it seemed to the Chinese that was exactly what he was doing, and they did not mind. For, in the end, they received exactly what they wanted in return: continuous diplomatic recognition and ardent support of their re-establishment to the United Nations.

⁴⁹ ZNA: FA 1-44.

⁵⁰ “China’s £100-m. rail bid,” *Times of Zambia* (June, 29, 1967), 1.

Conclusion

After copper prices fell in the 1980s, the TAZARA railway fell into disrepair and the Zambian economy collapsed. Although the Zambian government is now working to diversify the economy, copper prices have risen significantly in the past ten years and they are again searching for routes out for their exports. So, in February of 2007, the Chinese signed on the rebuild the TAZARA railway, and forgive all previous debts. It is this renewal of support, combined with many other such contemporary economic involvements throughout the continent that make the study of the development of Chinese relations with Africa so important.

Much has changed internally in China since its participation in the Bandung Conference in 1955, including the significant move towards an increasingly capitalistic form of economy. However, China's insistence on its equality with the nations of the Africa remains the same. In the past ten years, the world has witnessed a surge of Chinese interest, aid, and investment across the African continent. Many of the projects and partnerships fostered between China and various African nations have been shrouded with controversy and concern. Politicians, businessmen, economists, journalists, and people whose lives are directly influenced by the Chinese presence in Africa have watched these developments with avid attention.⁵¹ The world certainly sees China as the emerging global superpower of the twenty-first century, yet China still refers to itself as a

⁵¹ On China's contemporary relations with African nations, see, Chris Alden, *China in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2007); and Ian Taylor, *China's New Role in Africa* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009). Most contemporary studies of Chinese policy towards Africa ignore the historical element. However, while both Alden and Taylor are political scientists, they are perhaps the best at incorporating history.

“developing nation.” However, despite this conflict of opinion, China’s strategic self-depreciation is one of the fundamentals of understanding the history of Chinese foreign policy towards Africa. and remains an important point today.

Appendix I: Chronology

1 October 1949	Establishment of the People's Republic of China
14 August 1952	Alfred Sauvy coins the term "third world"
8 May 21 July 1954	Geneva Conference
June 1954	Establishment of "Panch Shila," or the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence
1 November 1954	Beginning of the Algerian War for Independence
6-10 April 1955	Asian Nations Conference
18-24 April 1955	Bandung Conference
29 October 1956	Beginning of the Suez Crisis
6 March 1957	The British colony of the Gold Coast declares independence and becomes the independent nation of Ghana.
26 December 1957 Organization	Founding of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity
1960	"Year of African Independence." Seventeen African nations become independent.
December 1963- February 1964	Zhou En Lai's trip to Africa
24 October 1964	The British colony of Northern Rhodesia becomes the Independent nation of Zambia.
16 May 1966	Launching of the Cultural Revolution in China
1970- 1975	Building of the TAZARA Railway by China from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania to Lusaka, Zambia
25 October 1971	Re-establishment of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Security Council

Appendix II: Diplomatic Relations between China and Africa

Country	Date of Independence	A.A.P.S.O. Member?	Diplomatic Relations Est.
Egypt	28 February 1922	Yes	30 May 1956
Morocco	2 March 1956	Yes	1 November 1958
Algeria	21 September 1958	Yes	20 December 1958
Sudan	1 January 1956	No	4 February 1959
Guinea	2 October 1958	Yes	4 October 1959
Ghana	6 March 1957	Yes	5 July 1960
Mali	22 September 1960	No	27 October 1960
Somalia	1 July 1960	Yes	14 December 1960
Congo (K)	30 June 1960	Yes	20 February 1961
Tanzania	9 December 1961	Yes	December 1961
Uganda	9 October 1962	No	18 October 1962
Zanzibar	10 December 1963	No	11 December 1963
Kenya	12 December 1963	Yes	14 December 1963
Burundi	1 July 1962	No	23 December 1963
Tunisia	20 March 1956	Yes	10 January 1964
Congo (B)	15 August 1960	No	22 February 1964
Central African Republic	13 August 1960	No	29 September 1964
Zambia	24 October 1964	Yes	31 October 1964
Benin	1 August 1960	No	12 November 1964
Mauritania	28 November 1960	No	19 July 1965
Equatorial Guinea	12 October 1968	No	15 October 1970
Ethiopia		No	24 November 1970

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